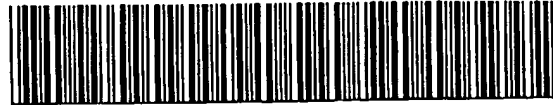


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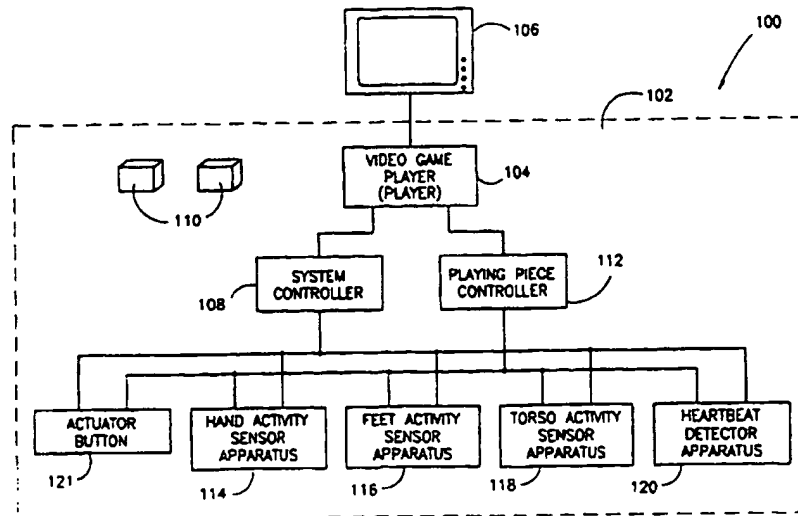


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(54) Title: A USER CONTROLLED COMBINATION VIDEO GAME AND EXERCISE SYSTEM



(57) Abstract

A user controlled combination video game apparatus (102) and exercise system. The system includes video game apparatus for displaying an interactive video game (110) requiring user participation. The interactive video game includes a playing piece. The system also includes hand activity sensor apparatus (114) for providing a signal associated with the independent and unconstrained movement of each of a user's hands for determining at least one aspect of the playing piece within said interactive video game and a playing piece. The system can also include feet activity sensor apparatus (116) for providing a signal associated with an activity executed by the user's feet, and torso activity sensor apparatus (118) for providing a signal associated with an activity executed by the user's torso for determining at least one aspect of the playing piece within the interactive video game.

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A USER CONTROLLED COMBINATION VIDEO GAME AND EXERCISE SYSTEM

FIELD AND BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to user controlled combination video
5 game and exercise systems in general and in particular to those user
controlled combination video game and exercise systems which require
both effort and time-space coordination on behalf of the user.

Various patents have attempted to integrate video game apparatus
with exercise devices for encouraging users to maintain a regular exercise
10 program by providing fun, challenging and self-motivating environments.

For example, U.S. Patent 4,278,095 to Lapeyre describes a treadmill
and a monitor for displaying the user's speed and distance and a variable
speed outdoor exercising scene controlled by the speed of the user on the
treadmill. However, the exercising scene is not interactive per se in that
15 the user does not participate in a competitive interactive video game.

While U.S. Patent 4,925,189 to Braeunig describes a body mounted
video game controller which attaches to the user's upper body allowing the
user to play a video game by leaning the upper body in different directions
to simulate the movement of a joystick. The user may play from a
20 standing, sitting, kneeling position and therefore this user controlled
combination video game and exercise devices suffers from the disadvantage
that the user is not required to engage in intense physical activity during
a training session.

And while U.S. Patent 4,720,789 to Hector et al. describes a video
25 exercise or game floor controller with location indicating foot pads which
allow an operator to input information into the system by locating his feet
on foot pads of the floor controller. The game floor controller can also
include light segments associated with each of the foot pads to encourage
rapid foot movement by the fast switching on and off of different light
30 segments. However, the apparatus does not measure whether the user is

merely shifting his weight from one foot to the other foot in a tap dancing style or whether the user is sustaining intense physical activity, for example, by running on the spot.

Other developments include adjusting the video game difficulty level
5 upon the effort executed by the user during exercise. Typically the difficulty level of the video game is regulated such that the heartbeat of the user remains within a pre-determined specified target zone. The exercise is executed on an exerciser such as a treadmill, standing bicycle, standing rowing machine, and the like including speed sensors for indicating the
10 effort executed by the user. Examples of such exercisers are described in U.S. Patents 4,489,938 to Darzinskis, 4,512,567 to Phillips, 4,542,897 to Melton et al., 4,637,605 to Ritchie, 4,660,828 to Weiss, 4,709,917 to Yang, 4,711,447 to Mansfield, 4,817,950 to Goo, 5,001,632 to Hall-Tipping, 5,054,771 to Mansfield, 5,139,261 to Openiano, 5,148,152 to Stuekle et al.,
15 5,195,746 to Boyd et al. and 5,277,678 to Friedabach and 5,308,296 to Eckstein.

The existing devices evaluate physical effort either by monitoring the device itself or by the monitoring the heartbeat of the user. The monitoring of the device itself suffers from the disadvantage that the
20 aerobic effort expended in activities which are not performed directly on the device cannot be monitored. The disadvantage of monitoring the user's heartbeat is that the heartbeat is a subjective measurements which depends on the condition and fitness of the specific user and does not constitute an objective determination which can be used to compare a number of users
25 as in an actual sports game.

Therefore, there is a need for a user controlled combination video game and exercise device while overcoming the deficiencies of the above-mentioned apparatus. More specifically, there is a need for a device which monitors both the activity of the user and an objective physical parameter
30 which does not depend on the condition and fitness of the user and which,

as a result, makes it possible to evaluate activities which cannot be properly evaluated heretofore, such as, for example, running in place, jumping, knee lifts in the sitting position, and the like.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

5 The present invention is for a user controlled combination video game and exercise system which encourages the user to engage in intense aerobic activity during a challenging and motivating training session. In addition, the system can be employed for user participation in a wide range of recreational activities, such as dancing, and the like.

10 Hence, there is provided according to the present invention, a user controlled combination video game apparatus and exercise system, the system comprising: (a) video game apparatus for displaying an interactive video game requiring user participation, the interactive video game including a playing piece; (b) limb activity sensor apparatus for providing
15 a signal associated with the independent and unconstrained movement of at least two of a user's limbs for determining at least one aspect of the playing piece within the interactive video game; and (c) a playing piece controller responsive to the signal for controlling the playing piece.

 According to a further feature of the present invention, the limb
20 activity sensor apparatus includes a left hand activity sensor operable by the left hand of the user and a right hand activity sensor operable by the right hand of the user.

 According to a still further feature of the present invention, the limb sensor apparatus includes a left foot activity sensor operable by the left
25 foot of the user and a right foot activity sensor operable by the right foot of the user.

 According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, at least a portion of the limb activity sensor apparatus is worn by the user.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, at least a portion of the limb activity sensor apparatus is held by the user.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, at least a portion of the limb activity sensor apparatus is remote from the
5 user.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, at least a portion of the limb activity sensor apparatus is associated with an exercise apparatus on which the user exercises.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the
10 exercise apparatus provides information associated with an activity executed by the user.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the limb activity sensor apparatus includes an actuator button.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the
15 playing piece controller controls one aspect of the playing piece selected from the following group: the number of pixels moved by the playing piece per screen refresh, the size of the playing piece, the shape of the playing piece, the color of the playing piece, the location of the playing piece, the direction of movement of the playing piece, the firing rate of the playing
20 piece, and the interaction of the playing piece with other objects on the screen.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the interactive video game is played between the user and another user.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the
25 system further comprising torso activity sensor apparatus for providing a signal associated with an activity executed by the user's torso for determining at least one aspect of the playing piece within the interactive video game.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, at
30 least a portion of the torso activity sensor apparatus is worn by the user.

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According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, at least a portion of the torso activity sensor apparatus is associated with an exercise apparatus on which the user exercises.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the
5 system further comprising a heartbeat detector apparatus for providing a signal associated with an activity executed by the user for determining at least one aspect of the playing piece within the interactive video game.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the system further comprising a system controller responsive to the signal for
10 controlling at least a portion of the system.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the system controller controls at least one feature of an exercise apparatus.

According to a yet still further feature of the present invention, the system further comprising strain sensors for detecting the force applied by
15 at least one limb of the user.

There is also provided apparatus for measuring aerobic activity executed by a user, the apparatus comprising: (a) at least one sensor for detecting the impact frequency of at least one of the user's feet on a surface; and (b) at least one sensor for detecting the percentage of time that
20 at least one of the user's feet is on a surface.

There is still further provided a user controlled combination video game apparatus and exercise system, the system comprising: (a) video game apparatus for displaying an interactive video game requiring user participation, the interactive video game including a playing piece; (b)
25 activity sensor apparatus for providing a signal associated with the ambulatory speed of a user for determining at least one aspect of the playing piece within the interactive video game; and (c) a playing piece controller responsive to the signal for controlling the playing piece.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The invention is herein described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 shows a block diagram of the preferred embodiment of a user
5 controlled combination video game and exercise system constructed and operative according to the teachings of the present invention;

FIGS. 2a and 2b depict a Squash video game screen and a Squash video game instruction screen, respectively, according to the teachings of the present invention;

10 FIGS. 2c and 2d depict a Survival Training video game screen and a Survival Training video game instruction screen, respectively, according to the teachings of the present invention;

FIG. 2e depicts a Badminton Training video game screen according to the teachings of the present invention;

15 FIG. 2f depicts a Dance Training video game screen according to the teachings of the present invention;

FIGS. 3a-3d depicts several representative system control screens provided by the video game apparatus of the system including a Start Training Session screen, a Select Video Game screen, a Select Difficulty
20 Level screen and a Select Training Duration screen, respectively;

FIG. 4 shows a schematic illustration of a first embodiment of the user controlled combination video game and exercise system of Figure 1 in which the aerobic activity sensor apparatus includes transmitters worn by the user and receivers integrated with the video game apparatus of the
25 system;

FIG. 5 shows a schematic illustration of the first embodiment of the user controlled combination video game and exercise system of Figure 1 being used by two users concurrently;

FIG. 6 shows a schematic illustration of a second embodiment of the
30 user controlled combination video game and exercise system of Figure 1

in which the aerobic activity sensor apparatus includes transmitters worn by the user and receivers integrated with an exercise apparatus configured as an exercise mat;

FIG. 7 shows a schematic illustration of a third embodiment of the user controlled combination video game and exercise system of Figure 1 in which the aerobic activity sensor apparatus includes feet sensors and hand activity sensors integrated with an exercise apparatus configured as an exercise mat;

FIG. 8 shows a schematic illustration of a fourth embodiment of the user controlled combination video game and exercise system of Figure 7 in which the exercise mat is rotatably mounted on a base;

FIGS. 9a and 9b show a schematic illustration of a fifth embodiment of the user controlled combination video game and exercise system including a treadmill;

FIGS. 10a-10c show three operative positions of the hand activity sensors for detecting three heights of one of the user's hand;

FIGS. 11a and 11b show schematic illustrations of hand activity sensors for detecting direction of movement of a user's hands along one axis and along two axes, respectively;

FIG. 12 shows a table entitled "Speed of User's Playing Piece as a Function of the Level of Aerobic Activity of the User as measured by Foot Sensors"; and

FIG. 13 shows a table entitled "Speed of User's Playing Piece as a Function of the Hand Speed of the User as Measured by Hand Sensors".

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

The present invention is of a user controlled combination video game and exercise system.

The principles and operation of the user controlled combination video game and exercise system of the present invention may be better

understood with reference to the drawings and the accompanying description.

With reference now to the drawings, Figure 1 shows a block diagram of a user controlled combination video game and exercise system, generally designated 100, constructed and operative according to the teachings of the present invention. Generally speaking, user controlled combination video game and exercise system 100 of the present invention marries the intense concentration and total involvement required by a user in playing a challenging interactive video game with exercise. However, at the same time, system 100 can be employed for non-strenuous recreational activities, for example, for instructing dancing, and the like. In both cases, system 100 requires skilful co-ordination in the manner in which the user executes an activity in response to events taking place within the video game.

Hence, system 100 includes video game apparatus 102 including a video game controller 104 for displaying an interactive video game on a display 106 observable by a user. Display 106 is preferably a conventional TV monitor and therefore the connection between video game apparatus 102 and display 106 is achieved in a similar fashion as between a video player and a TV monitor. Alternatively, display 106 can be a dedicated monitor, a projected screen, a hologram and similar display system. Video game apparatus 102 also includes a system controller 108 for controlling the operation of user controlled combination video game and exercise system 100. System controller 108 controls such operations as initiating a training session, selecting a video game, selecting a game difficulty, selecting the duration of a training session, providing a summary of pertinent information regarding the performance of the user, and the like. In addition, system controller 108 can be used for regulating a feature of an exercise apparatus, for example, the resistance of a treadmill.

Video game apparatus 102 is preferably designed to accept cartridges 110 wherein each cartridge 110 provides interactive video games of a particular type. The video games can also be classified according to other criteria, for example, number of users. The number of users can be one, two or more. In the case of a single user, the user plays against video game apparatus 102 while in the case of two or more users, the users can play either against each other or against video game apparatus 102.

The interactive video games are typically competitive sport-type games, arcade-type games, Gameboy-type games, and the like for encouraging the user to engage in intense aerobic activity and to maintain an intensive training schedule. Sport-type games can include racket games, for example, squash, tennis, ball games, for example, football, basketball, and other games such as boxing, adventures, indoor activities, outdoor activities. Arcade-type games can include, for example, Tetris™, Pacman™, etc. Furthermore, the competitive interactive video games can include queries, for example, mathematical problems, logic problems, and the like which the user is required to answer during a session on system 100 such that the user is challenged both on the physical level and on the cognitive level.

The competitive interactive video games of video game controller 104 include one or more playing pieces under the control of a playing piece controller 112. The playing pieces depend on the nature of the video game in question. Typical playing pieces include, but are not limited to, a racket in a racket game, a player in a ball game, a "monster" in a Pacman™ game, and the like. Also, the playing piece can be hidden within the video game, the whole screen, and the whole scenario. In principle, playing piece controller 112 controls the playing piece in such a fashion that the user is more likely to achieve a higher score, a victory or similar desirable game outcome through increasing his level of effort. However, as will become apparent below, it is not the mere level of effort which

secures a desirable game outcome but also the skilful time and space co-ordination, and response to queries, if any, as practiced by the user while participating during the ongoing video game as displayed on display 106.

However, it should be noted that the term "interactive video game" also refers to a wide range of low aerobic intensity simulation scenarios, animation scenarios, virtual reality scenarios, and the like as known in the art. For example, a simulation scenario can include a training session for teaching how to dance a dance, how to perform judo exercises, gymnastic activities, and the like. In the case of teaching dancing, the user can be represented as one member of a dancing couple while video game apparatus 102 provides the second member of the dancing couple. Hence, the member of the dancing couple representing the user is the playing piece under the control of playing piece controller 110. Alternatively, two users can dance together. In both cases, the desirable game outcome can be a score similar to that given in conventional dancing competitions. As before, it can be readily appreciated that the interactive video game outcome requires skilful time and space co-ordination on behalf of the user.

System controller 108 and playing piece controller 112 receive input from one or more sources including hand activity sensor apparatus 114, feet activity sensor apparatus 116, and torso activity sensor apparatus 118. Generally speaking, hand activity sensor apparatus 114 detects independent and unconstrained movement of each of the user's arms. While feet activity sensor apparatus 116 detects independent and unconstrained movement of each of the user's legs. And torso activity sensor apparatus 118 detects any independent and unconstrained movement of the user's torso. It can be readily appreciated that system 100 can include other activity sensors for detecting activity of other parts of the body, for example, the head, knees, elbows, etc.

It is a particular feature of the present invention that within the context of the present invention, independent movement implies that the

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limbs of the user can move independently of each other, i.e. the left arm can be moved upwards while the right arm remains stationary, rather than being constrained to execute a common motion or an opposing motion, for example, when gripping handlebars of a bicycle, manipulating oars of a rowing boat, and the like. It is a further feature of the present invention that within the context of the present invention unconstrained movement implies that the limbs of the user can be moved in any natural movement rather than being constrained to execute a specific movement, for example, turning the handlebars of a bicycle, running along a treadmill, riding a bicycle, and the like.

Hand activity sensor apparatus 114, feet activity sensor apparatus 116, and torso activity sensor apparatus 118 typically each include a Look-Up-Table having a "game value" for the manner in which a particular activity is executed. The manner in which "game values" are awarded for movements demanding a greater expenditure of aerobic energy or greater space-time co-ordination depend on the type of video game. For example, in a tennis video game, a greater expenditure of aerobic energy can be used for increasing the speed of the racket of the user. While, in a Pacman video game, a greater expenditure of energy can be used for slowing down a "monster" trying to catch the user. And while in a dance teaching video game, a more difficult step can be give a greater "game value".

The likelihood of achieving a higher score, a victory or other desirable game outcome is correlated to the activity executed by the user through adapting one or more features of the playing piece. First, playing piece controller 112 can control the maneuverability of a playing piece such that its maneuverability is a function of the level of aerobic activity of the user or the level of time-space coordination displayed by the user. Maneuverability typically refers to the "speed" and "location" of the playing piece given in terms of the number of pixels moved within each screen refresh of display 106. Second, playing piece controller 112 can

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control the size of a playing piece such that its size is a function of the level of aerobic activity of the user or the level of time-space coordination displayed by the user. Third, playing piece controller 112 can control the "firing rate" of a playing piece such that the firing rate is a function of the level of aerobic activity of the user or the level of time-space coordination displayed by the user. Fourth, playing piece controller 112 can control the shape of the playing piece such that its shape is a function of the level of aerobic activity of the user or the level of time-space coordination displayed by the user. Fifth, playing piece controller 112 can control the color of the playing piece such that its color is a function of the level of aerobic activity of the user or the level of time-space coordination displayed by the user. And sixth, playing piece controller 112 can control the interaction of the playing piece with other objects in a video game such that its interaction is a function of the level of aerobic activity of the user or the level of time-space coordination displayed by the user.

Furthermore, system controller 108 and playing piece controller 112 can also receive input from a heartbeat detector apparatus 120. Heartbeat detector apparatus 120 can be employed, for example, for terminating a training session when the heartbeat of a user exceeds a pre-determined value according to his age, general state of fitness, etc. Alternatively, heartbeat detector apparatus 120 can be employed instead of hand activity sensor apparatus 114, feet activity sensor apparatus 116, or torso activity sensor apparatus 118 for providing input regarding the level of aerobic activity executed by a user. Still further, system controller 108 and playing piece controller 112 can also receive input from actuator buttons 121 employed on hand activity sensor apparatus 114, feet activity sensor apparatus 116, or torso activity sensor apparatus 118 as known in the art of joystick controllers and the like.

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With reference now to Figures 2a-2f, the screens depict representative interactive video games playable by one or more users on user controlled video game and exercise system 100.

Turning now to Figures 2a and 2b, Figure 2a depicts a Squash video game screen 122 while Figure 2b shows depicts a Squash video game instruction screen 124. The purpose of the Squash video game is to keep a ball 126 within a court 128 as long as possible. This is achieved by the user moving a racket 130 located at the bottom of the screen to the left and to the right such that ball 126 rebounds off racket 130, thereby remaining in court 128. The number of times that the user successfully intercepts ball 126 is shown on a scoreboard 132. In this case, the user is required to run faster to move racket 130 faster and to raise either his left or right hand to move racket 130 to the left or the right, respectively. Hence, it can be readily appreciated that the user has to display considerable bodily coordination and exert considerable aerobic activity in order to achieve a high score.

Turning now to Figures 2c and 2d, Figure 2c depicts a Survival Training video game screen 134 while Figure 2d shows depicts a Survival Training video game instruction screen 136. The purpose of the Survival Training video game is to clear a way in a jungle 138 to reach food shown as apples 140, to avoid being eaten by monsters 142 shown as squares and to kill one or more monsters 142 within a 3 second period after having eaten an apple 140. This is achieved by the user moving an "action man" playing piece 144 along the pathways through jungle 138. The number of apples 140 that the user eats and the number of monsters 142 that he kills is shown on a scoreboard 146. In this case, the user is required to run faster to move playing piece 144 faster, to raise his left or right hand to move playing piece 144 to the left or the right, respectively, raise both arms to move playing piece 144 up and to lower both arms to move playing piece 144 down. Again, it can be readily appreciated that the user

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has to display considerable bodily coordination and exert considerable aerobic activity in order to achieve a high score.

Turning now to Figure 2e, Figure 2e depicts a Badminton Training video game screen 148. The purpose of the Badminton Training video game is to keep a ball 150 within a court 152 as long as possible. This is achieved by the user moving a racket 154 located at the bottom of the screen to the left and to the right such that ball 150 rebounds off racket 154, thereby remaining in court 152. The number of times that the user successfully intercepts ball 150 is shown on a scoreboard 156. In this case, the user is required to raise either his left or right hand to move racket 154 to the left or the right, respectively. By running faster, the user can increase the size of racket 154. In another version, the speed that the user runs determines the height of rebound of ball 150 from racket 154 such that the height of rebound increases with a faster running speed. Hence, it can be readily appreciated that the user has to display considerable bodily coordination and exert considerable aerobic activity in order to achieve a high score.

Turning now to Figure 2f, Figure 2f depicts a Dance Training video game screen 158. The purpose of the Dance Training video game is to teach a user a dance. This is achieved by the user being represented a first member 160 of a dancing couple under the control of playing piece controller 110 while video game apparatus 102 provides a second member 162 of the dancing couple. A score is provided according to the manner in which the user performs the dance routine correctly. As before, it can be readily appreciated that the interactive video game outcome requires skilful time and space co-ordination on behalf of the user to achieve a high score.

With reference now to Figures 3a-3d, and as described with reference to several representative system control screens, hand activity sensor apparatus 114, feet activity sensor apparatus 116, torso activity

sensor apparatus 118 and heartbeat detector apparatus 120 can provide input to system controller 108 for controlling the operation of user controlled combination video game and exercise system 100. In particular Figure 3a depicts a Start Training Session screen 164 in which the user is required to stand on an exercise apparatus and raise his hands to initiate a training session. While Figure 3b depicts a Select Video Game screen 166 in which the user is required to raise one hand to scroll through video games options and to raise both hands to select a particular video game that he wants to play. Figure 3c depicts a Select Difficulty Level screen 168 operative in a similar manner to the Select Video Game screen 166 except that the user is selecting a game difficulty, for example, Novice, Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. And finally, Figure 3d depicts a Select Training Duration screen 170 operative in a similar manner to the Select Video Game screen 166 except that the user is selecting the duration of a training session.

With reference now to Figures 4-9, the schematic illustrations depict several implementations of user controlled combination video game and exercise system 100 constructed and operative according to the teachings of the present invention.

Turning now to Figure 4, hand activity sensor apparatus 114, feet activity sensor apparatus 116 and torso activity sensor apparatus 118 are realized as transmitters and receivers couplings communicating through an IR interface, an RF interface and the like. The transmitters are typically worn by the user and the receivers are typically integrated with video game apparatus 102. Hence, the user can execute independent and unconstrained movements of his arms and legs as long as communication between the transmitters and the receivers is maintained. In the case of an IR interface, communication is maintained along the line of sight while in the case of an RF interface communication is maintained within the range of the transmitter-receiver coupling. Typically, each transmitter emits signals

having a particular characteristic such that the signals of each transmitter can be distinguished from the signals of the other transmitters. The receivers are deployed in such a manner that they can determine the location of each of transmitters and typically sample each transmitter in
5 sequence.

Hence, hand activity sensor apparatus 114 includes two hand sensors 172 and 174 for attaching to the user's wrists for detecting movement of the user's hands, feet activity sensor apparatus 116 includes two feet
10 sensors 176 and 178 for attaching to the user's ankles for detecting movement of the user's feet, torso activity sensor apparatus 118 includes a waist sensor 180 for attaching to the user's waist for detecting movement of the user's torso and video game apparatus 102 includes three receivers 182-186. Obviously, depending on the movement in question, some movements are registered by only one sensor, for example, raising the right
15 arm is only detected by sensor 172 while other movements, for example, jumping in the air, is registered by all of sensors 172-180. In addition, heart beat counter 120 provides the heart beat of the user during an exercise session on system 100.

It can be readily appreciated that playing piece controller 112 is
20 required to compute relative movements of one sensor compared to another sensor to determine the "game value" of some movements. For example, playing piece controller 112 only requires information from sensor 172 for determining the game value of an activity such as the user raising his hand from waist height to a raised height above his head while he is standing
25 stationary. While, in the case, that playing piece controller 112 is required to determine the game value of an activity such as the user raising and lowering his hands from waist height to the same raised height while jumping up in the air, playing piece controller 112 requires information from sensors 172, 174 and 180. This is because the absolute movements
30 of sensors 172 and 174 are relative to the movement of sensor 180.

Turning briefly to Figure 5, system 100 is depicted for the concurrent exercising of two users acting as adversaries in a common interactive game. In this case, the transmitters denoted a transmit signals at different frequencies from those transmitters denoted b such that system
5 100 can distinguish between the movements of the two users.

In the implementation of system 100 depicted in Figure 6, the signals of sensors 172-180 are picked up by receivers 182-186 embedded in an exercise mat 188. Again, receivers 182-186 are deployed such that playing piece controller 112 can determine the displacement of each sensor
10 172-180. In this case, system 100 includes a communication link 190 between receivers 182-186 and video game apparatus 102 realized as a flexible, electric cable, an IR interface, an RF interface, and the like. Alternatively, exercise mat 188 can be provided as a stepper or as a stair-type configuration.

15 Exercise mat 188 is similar in many respects to conventional exercise mats in that it is fabricated from a plastic covered, heavy duty sponge substrate designed for cushioning shocks derived from executing intense aerobic activity, for example, running on the spot. Also, exercise mat 188 preferably of sufficient size such that the user can perform
20 intensive aerobic exercise without having to pay undue attention to his position thereon so as not to constrain the independent and unconstrained movement of the user's legs.

In the implementation of system 100 depicted in Figure 7, hand activity sensor apparatus 114 includes hand sensors 192 and 194 and feet
25 activity sensor apparatus 116 includes feet sensors 196 and 198, both realized as pressure sensitive devices, load cells, switches, and the like integrated in an exercise mat 200. As shown, hand sensor 192 is deployed to the right of exercise mat 200 for detecting the movement of the user's right hand and hand sensor 194 is deployed to the left of exercise mat 200
30 for detecting the movement of the user's left hand. Hand activity sensor

192 is actuated by an elastic cord 202 provided with a handle 204 for gripping by the user's right hand while hand sensor 194 is actuated by an elastic cord 206 provided with a handle 208 for gripping by the user's left hand so as not to constrain the independent and unconstrained movement of the user's arms. In a similar manner, foot sensor 196 is located substantially at the center of the right half of exercise mat 200 for detecting the impact of the user's right foot on exercise mat 200 while foot sensor 198 is located substantially at the center of the left half of exercise mat 200 for detecting the impact of the user's left foot on exercise mat 200. As before, communication link 190 between hand sensors 192 and 194 and feet sensors 196 and 198 and video control apparatus 102 is through a flexible, electric cable, an IR interface, an RF interface, and the like. To extend the range of activities which can be executed on exercise mat 200 and the muscles which can be exercised, modifications to exercise mat 200 can include rotatably mounting it on a base 210 as shown in Figure 8. In this case, system 100 preferably includes a hand support 211 including actuator buttons 121.

With reference now to Figure 9a and 9b, system 100 is shown including a treadmill 212 which includes a speed sensor 213 for measuring the ambulatory speed of the user on treadmill 212. It should be noted that ambulatory speed within the context of the present invention refers to any speed from a gentle walking speed to a fast running speed. In this case, speed sensor 213 replaces hand activity sensor apparatus 114, foot activity sensor apparatus 116 and torso activity sensor apparatus 118 as input to system controller 108 and playing piece controller 112. As mentioned hereinabove, system controller 108 can regulate one or more features of an exercise apparatus, for example, the resistance of treadmill 212. Again, system 100 preferably includes a hand support 211 including actuator buttons 121. As before, the user participates in an interactive active video

game which requires both physical exertion and time and space coordination to achieve a desirable game output.

With reference now to Figures 10a-10c, the principle by which hand sensors 192 and 194 measures three heights, the speed and the acceleration of the user's hands is now described. In this case, hand sensor 192 includes two normally open (NO) switches 214 and 216 and a connector 218 extending therebetween. It should be noted that cord 202 is not attached to the center of connector 218 but rather towards one of switches 214 and 216 such that switches 214 and 216 do not close concurrently. Hence, the movement of the user's right hand is determined by whether none, one or both of switches 214 and 216 are closed from their normally open states. In this case, cord 202 is connected closer to switch 214 such that switch 214 closes before switch 216 regardless of the direction of movement of the user's right hand. Turning now to Figure 10a, it can be seen that when the user holds handle 204 at waist height, then both switches 214 and 216 are open. While as shown in Figure 10b, when the user holds handle 204 at shoulder height, then switch 214 is closed and switch 216 is open. And finally, as shown in Figure 10c, it can be seen that when the user holds handle 204 at a raised height above his head, then both switches 214 and 216 are closed. The speed and acceleration of the user's hands can be derived from the time taken to move through the three different states.

With reference now to Figures 11a and 11b, it can be readily appreciated that hand sensors 192 and 194 can also be designed to detect the direction of movement along one axis or both axes in Cartesian coordinates. For detecting direction of movement along one axis, hand sensors 192 and 194 require two sensor units 220 and 222. While, for detecting direction of movement along two axes, hand sensors 192 and 194 require three sensor units 224, 226 and 228.

With reference now to Figures 12 and 13, the tables depict typical examples of the manner in which playing piece controller 112 correlates one or more features of a playing piece with the user's level of aerobic activity such that the likelihood of achieving a higher score, a victory or
5 other desirable game outcome increases with an increased level of aerobic activity. For the sake of exposition, the tables are used by playing piece controller 112 when the user is playing the Squash video game on the implementation of system 100 shown in Figure 7. Hence in this case the playing piece is the racket.

10 It is a particular feature of the present invention that feet activity sensor apparatus 116 determines the level of aerobic activity by taking into account two factors: the impact frequency f of the user's feet on a surface and the airborne percentage of time p of the user's feet defined as the percentage of time that both feet are airborne. It can be readily appreciated
15 that it is not sufficient to take into account just the impact frequency by considering the amount of aerobic activity required when gently hopping from one foot to the other foot at a certain impact frequency as compared to when jogging on the spot at the same frequency as compared to running on the spot at the same frequency.

20 However, because of the cyclic nature of walking or running, it is typically sufficient to take into consideration the impact frequency and the airborne percentage of only one foot. Furthermore, the impact frequency can be taken of one foot while the airborne percentage can be taken of the other foot. Still further, the percentage of time that one or both of the
25 user's feet on a surface can be measured rather than measuring the airborne percentage as described above as they are complements of one another. The surface can be a floor or alternatively an exercise apparatus, for example, exercise mat 200.

Turning now to Figure 12, the table depicts a 5 x 6 matrix of 30
30 game scores for different levels of aerobic activity wherein the impact

frequency f is divided into five frequency levels: $f < 1$, $f = 1$ or 2 , $f = 3, 4$ or 5 , $f = 6$ or 7 and $f > 8$ and the airborne percentage p is divided into six levels: "Heavy Walking" for when $p < -40\%$, "Walking" for when p is between -40% to 0% , "Jogging" for when p is between 0% to 24% ,
5 "Running" for when p is between 24% to 50% , "Fast Running" for when p is between 50% to 70% and lastly "Sprinting" for when p is $> 70\%$. It should be noted that when p takes on a negative value, this implies that both of the user's feet are on the ground. As shown, at the lower levels of aerobic activity, for example, $f = 1$ or 2 and Heavy Walking, the speed
10 of the racket is 0 pixels per screen refresh i.e. the racket does not move. In a similar fashion, at the higher levels of aerobic activity, for example, $f = 6$ or 7 and Fast Running, the speed of the racket is seven pixels per screen refresh.

As described above with reference to Figure 2b, the user raises his
15 hands for moving the racket in the left and right directions. Hand activity sensor apparatus 114 can also provide a game value as to the hand speed sensed by hand sensors 192 and 194 such that the raising of the hands provides an additional input to the Squash video game. In this case, hand activity sensor apparatus 114 is responsive to the rate by which handles
20 204 and 208 are raised by the user for awarding him "bonus pixels" in terms of the movement of the racket.

The speed by which say handle 204 is raised can be determined by the delay time d between actuations of switches 214 and 216 (see Figures 10a-10c). With reference now to Figure 13, the delay time d is preferably
25 divided into five levels: $d > 200$ msec, d is between 160 to 200 msec, d is between 120 to 160 msec, d is between 90 to 120 msec and lastly d is less than 90 msec. The bonus pixels are provided as a function of the number of screen refreshes, in the example, five screen refreshes such that a total of twenty-five conditions are represented. As shown, for example,
30 when d is greater than 200 msec, the user receives no bonus pixels over

the next five screen refreshes while when, for example, d is less than 90 msec, the user receives 4 bonus pixels in the first screen refresh, 3 bonus pixels in the second screen refresh, and so on.

While the invention has been described with respect to a limited number of embodiments, it will be appreciated that many variations, modifications and other applications of the invention may be made.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A user controlled combination video game and exercise system comprising:
 - (a) video game apparatus for displaying an interactive video game requiring user participation, said interactive video game including a playing piece;
 - (b) feet activity sensor apparatus providing a signal determining frequency of a cyclical aerobic activity and level of difficulty of said aerobic activity; and
 - (c) a playing piece controller responsive to said signal for controlling said playing piece within said interactive video game.
2. The system of claim 1, wherein said frequency of a cyclical aerobic activity is determined by the impact frequency of at least one of the user's feet on a floor.
3. The system of claim 1, wherein said level of difficulty of said aerobic activity is determined by the percentage of time of least one of the user's feet on a floor.
4. The system as in claim 1, wherein said feet activity sensor apparatus provides a signal determining the impact frequency of each of the user's feet on said exercise surface and the percentage of time of each of the user's feet on a floor.
5. The system as in claim 1, wherein said feet activity sensor apparatus includes an exercise surface for providing said signal.

6. The system as in claim 1, further comprising hand activity sensor apparatus for monitoring a three dimensional working space, said apparatus providing a signal determining the location of at least one of the user's hands at any location within said working place, said playing piece controller responsive to said signal for controlling said playing piece within said interactive video game.

7. The system as in claim 5, further comprising hand activity sensor apparatus for monitoring a three dimensional working space, said apparatus providing a signal determining the location of at least one of the user's hands at any location within said working place, said playing piece controller responsive to said signal for controlling said playing piece within said interactive video game.

8. The system as in claim 6, wherein at least one portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is worn by the user, said at least a portion of limb activity sensor communicating with said playing piece controller by wireless means.

9. The system as in claim 6, wherein at least a portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is held by the user, said at least portion of limb activity sensor communicating with said playing piece controller by wireless means.

10. The system as in claim 6, wherein at least a portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is remote from the user, said at least a portion of hand activity sensor communicating with said playing piece controller by wireless means.

11. The system as in claim 1, further comprising a second feet activity sensor apparatus for providing a signal associated with the impact frequency of each of a second user's feet on a second exercise surface and the percentage of time that each of the second user's feet is on said second exercise surface such that said interactive video game is playable between a first user and the second user.

12. A user controlled combination video game and exercise system comprising:

- (a) video game apparatus for displaying an interactive video game requiring user participation, said interactive video game including a playing piece;
- (b) hand activity sensor apparatus providing at least one signal determining the distance of at least one of the user's hands from a pre-determined reference point within a three-dimensional training space; and
- (c) a playing piece controller responsive to said at least one signal for controlling said playing piece within said interactive video game.

13. The system as in claim 12, wherein at least a portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is worn by the user, said at least portion of hand activity sensor communicating with said playing piece controller by wireless means.

14. The system as in claim 12, wherein at least a portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is held by the user, said at least a portion of hand activity sensor communicating with said playing piece controller by wireless means.

15. The system as in claim 12, wherein at least a portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is remote from the user, said at least a portion of limb activity sensor communicating with said playing piece controller by wireless means.

16. The system as in claim 12, further comprising an exercise surface providing a signal associated with the impact frequency of each of the user's feet on said exercise surface and the percentage of time that the user's feet is on said exercise surface.

17. The system as in claim 16, wherein at least a portion of said hand activity sensor apparatus is held by the user.

18. The system as in claim 12, further comprising a second hand activity sensor apparatus providing at least one signal determining the distance of at least one of a second user's hand from a pre-determined reference point within a three-dimensional training space such that said interactive video game is playable between a first user and the second user.

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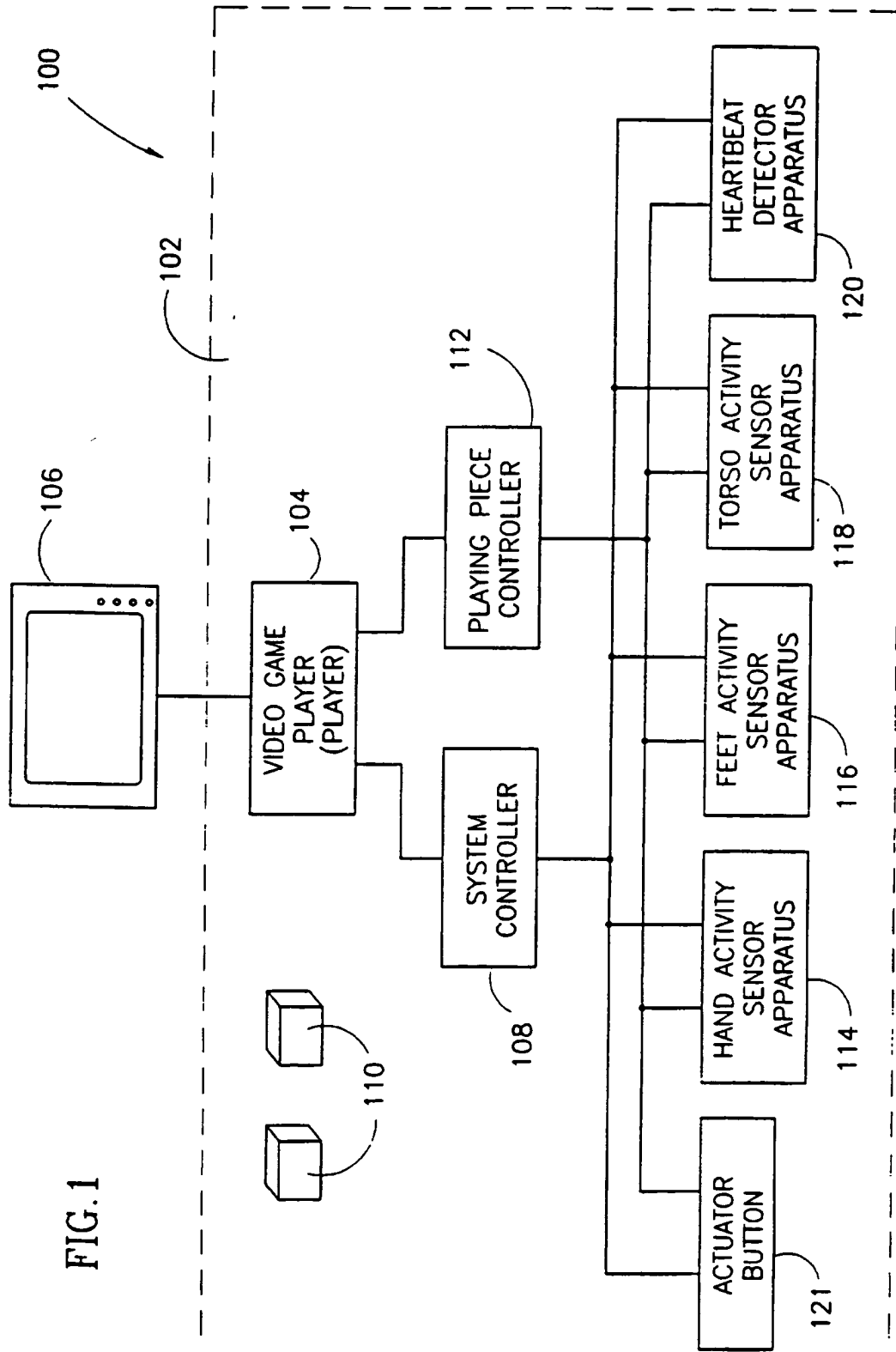


FIG. 1

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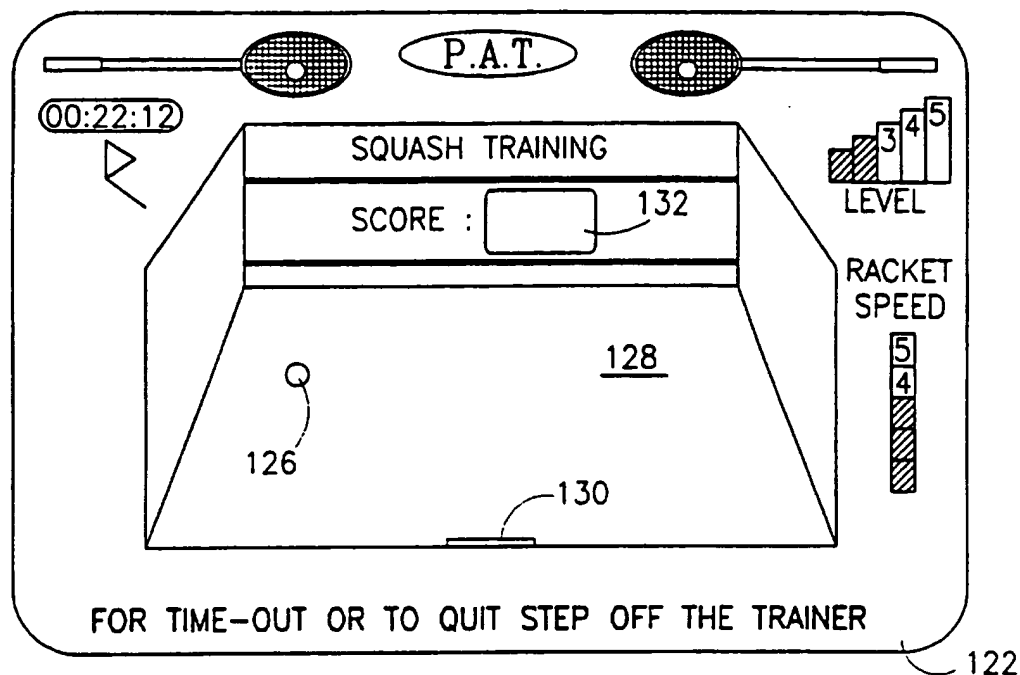


FIG. 2A

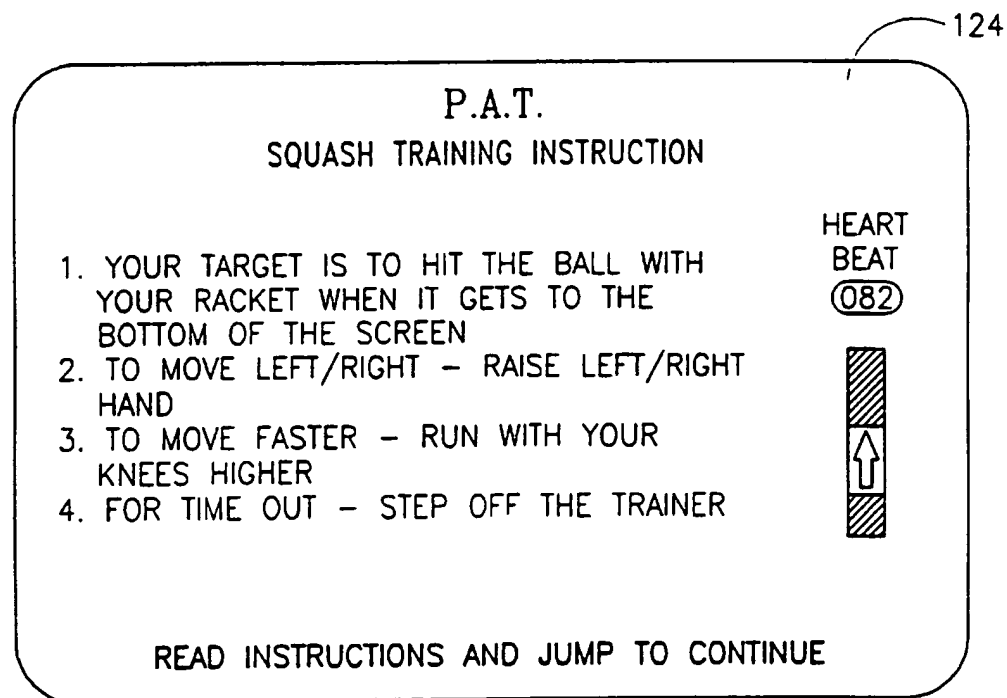


FIG. 2B

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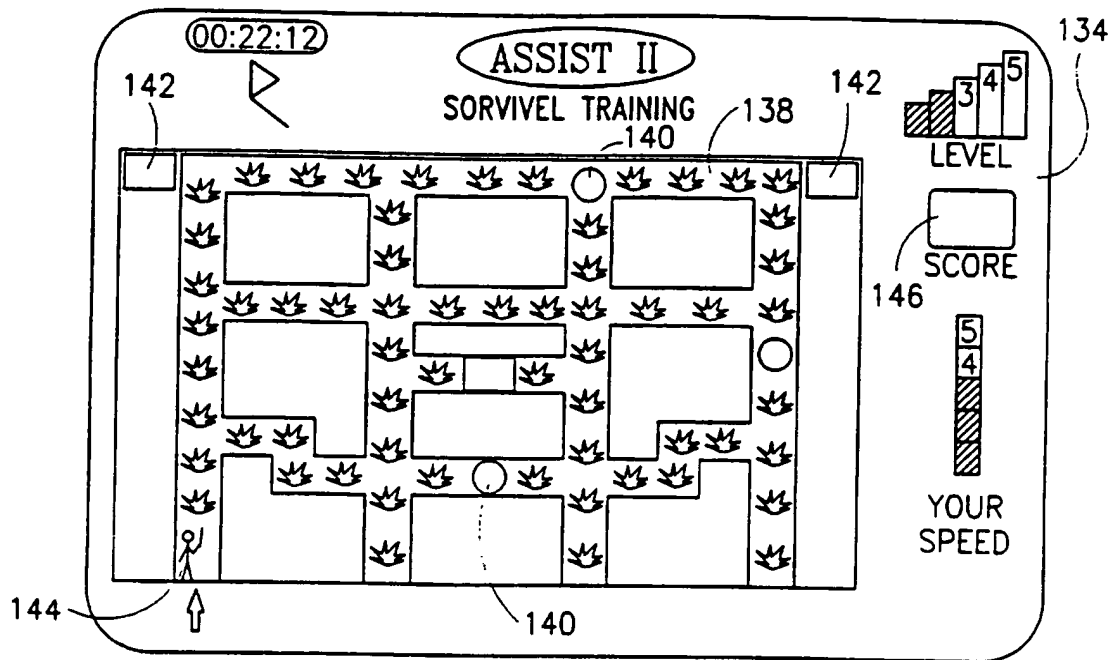


FIG. 2C

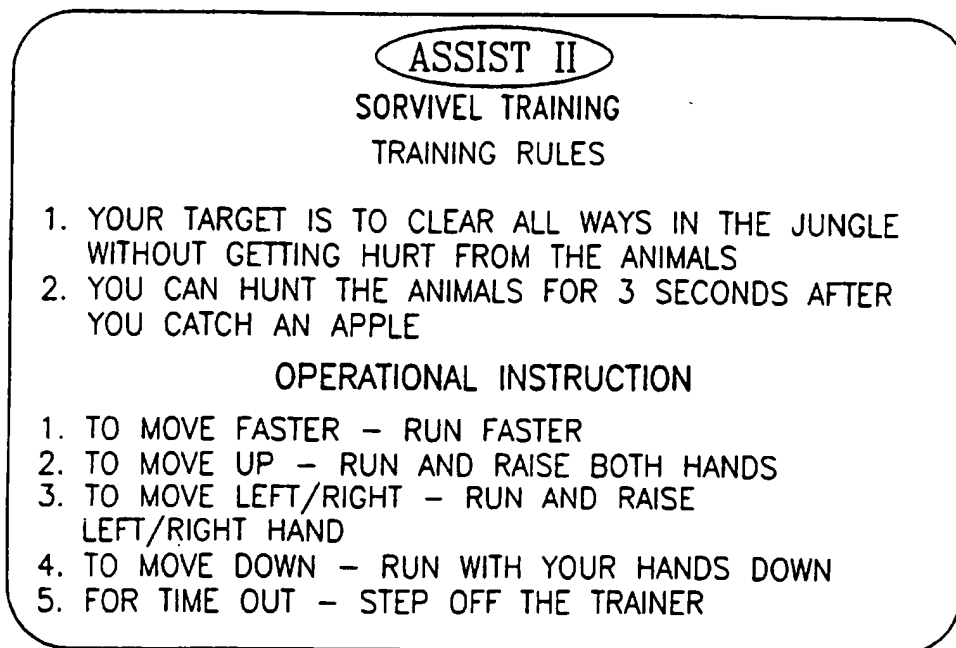


FIG. 2D

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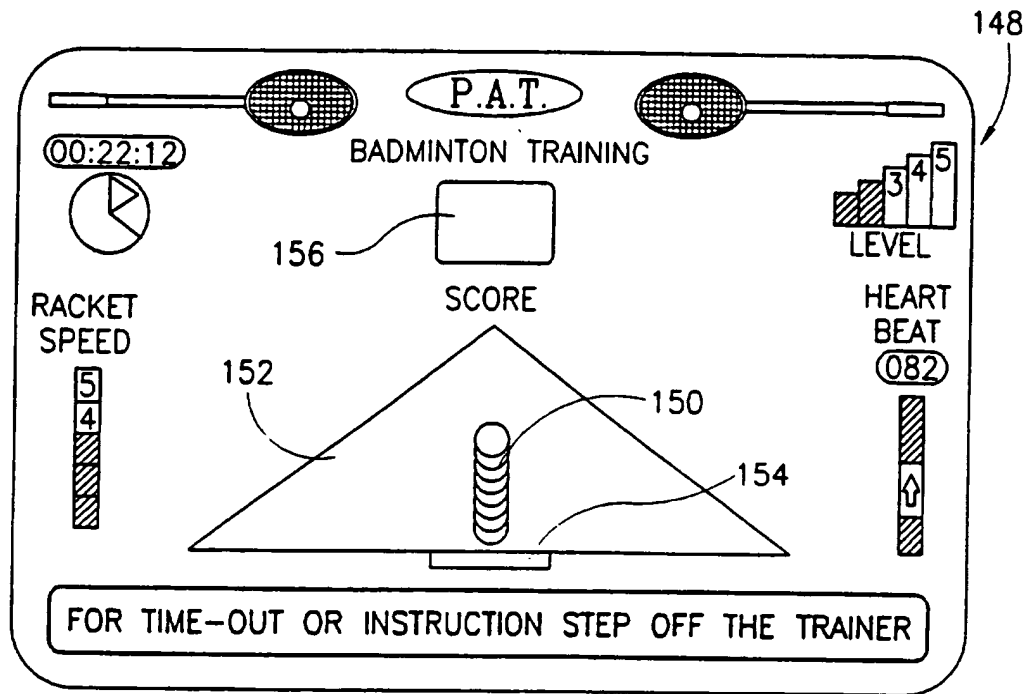


FIG. 2E

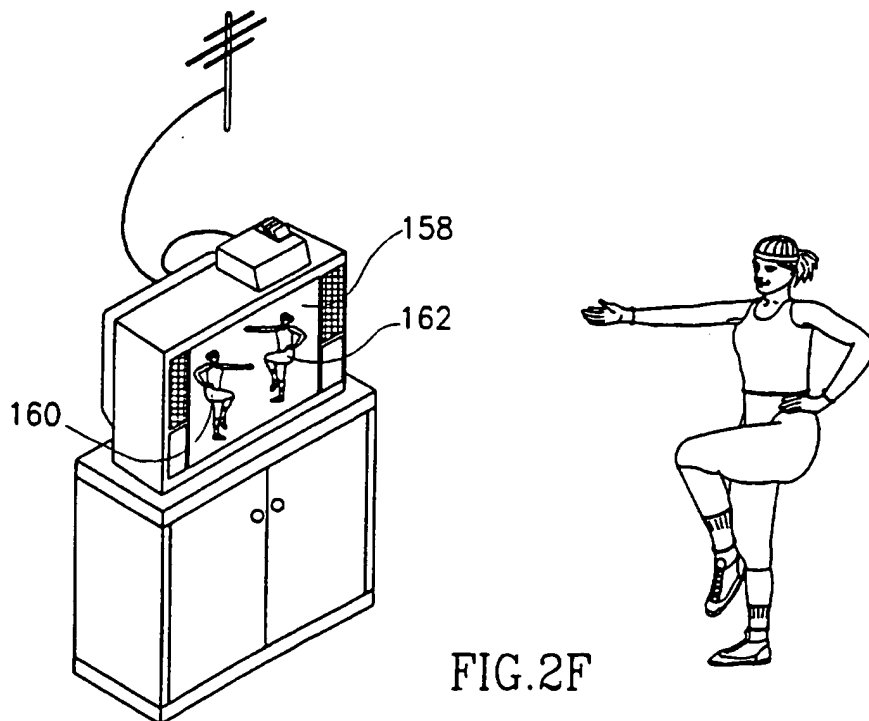


FIG. 2F

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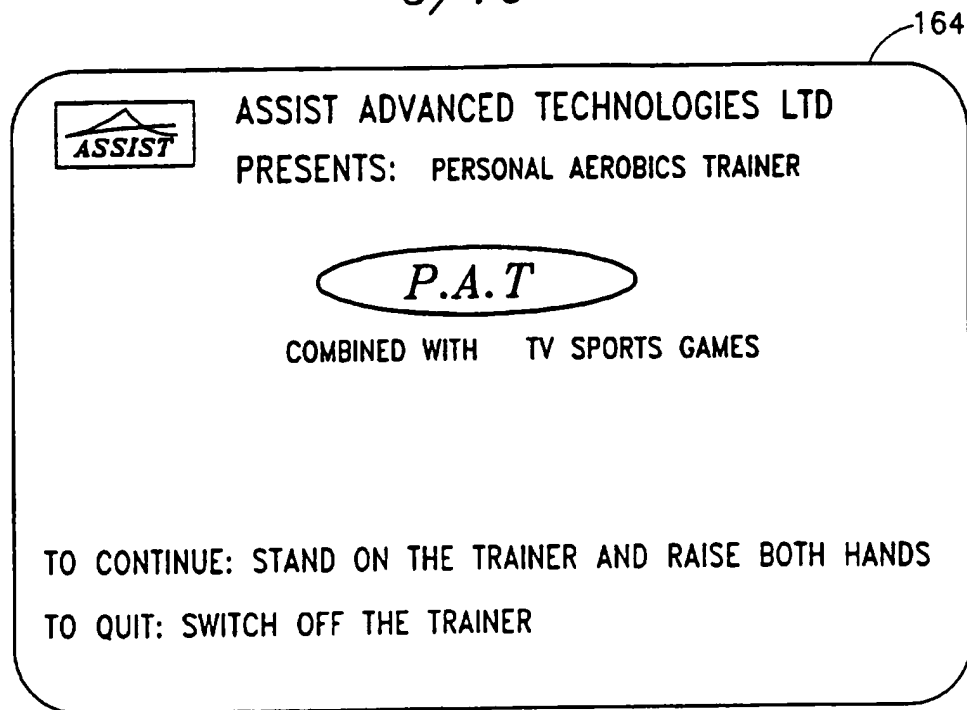


FIG. 3A

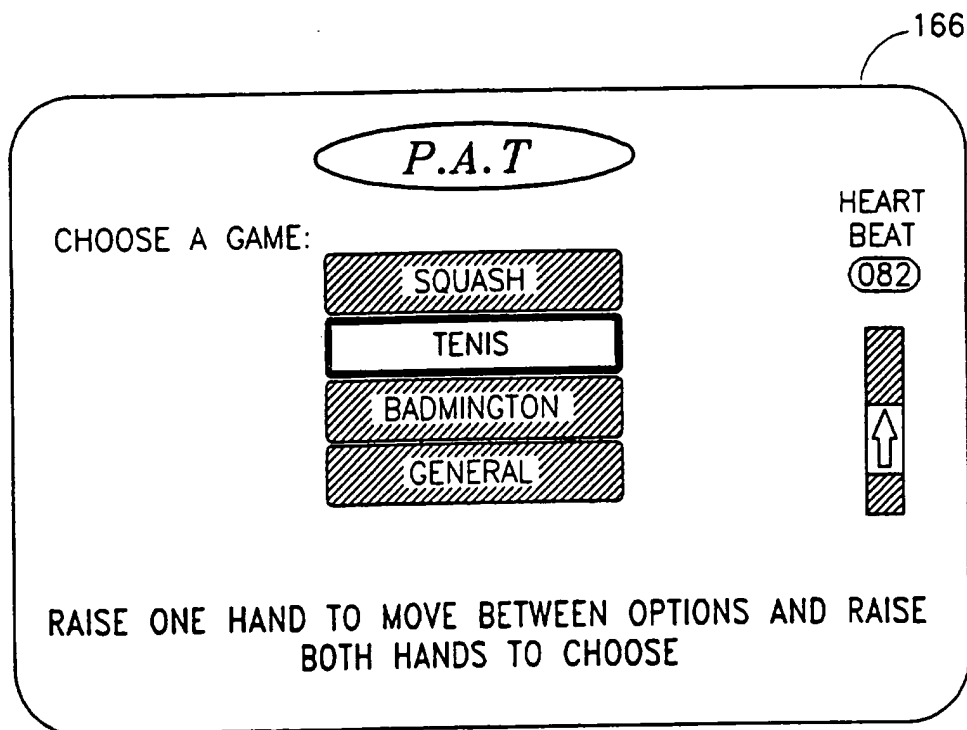


FIG. 3B

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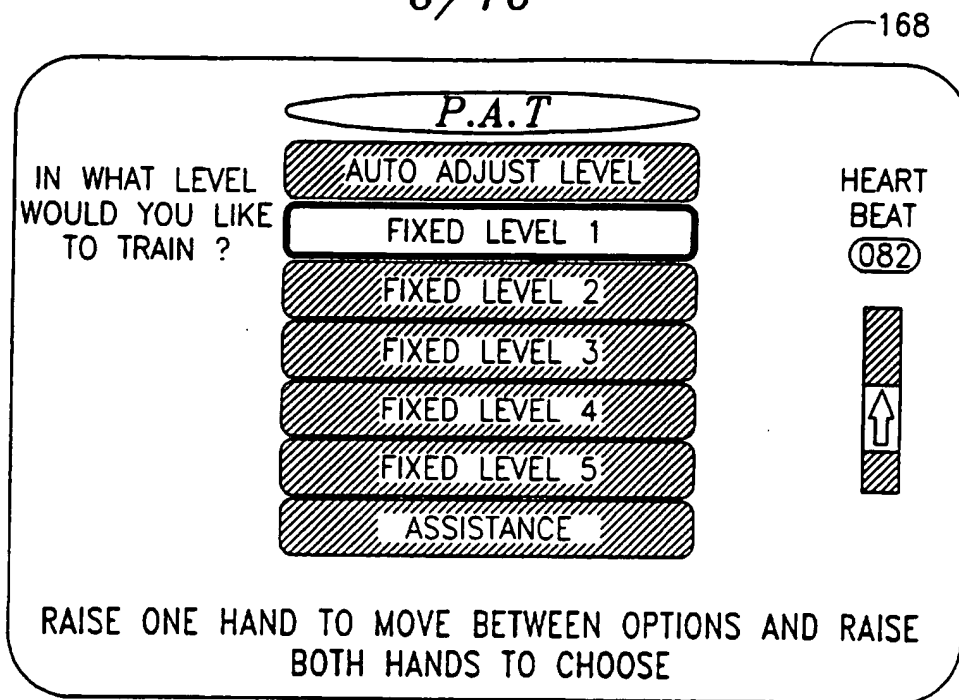


FIG. 3C

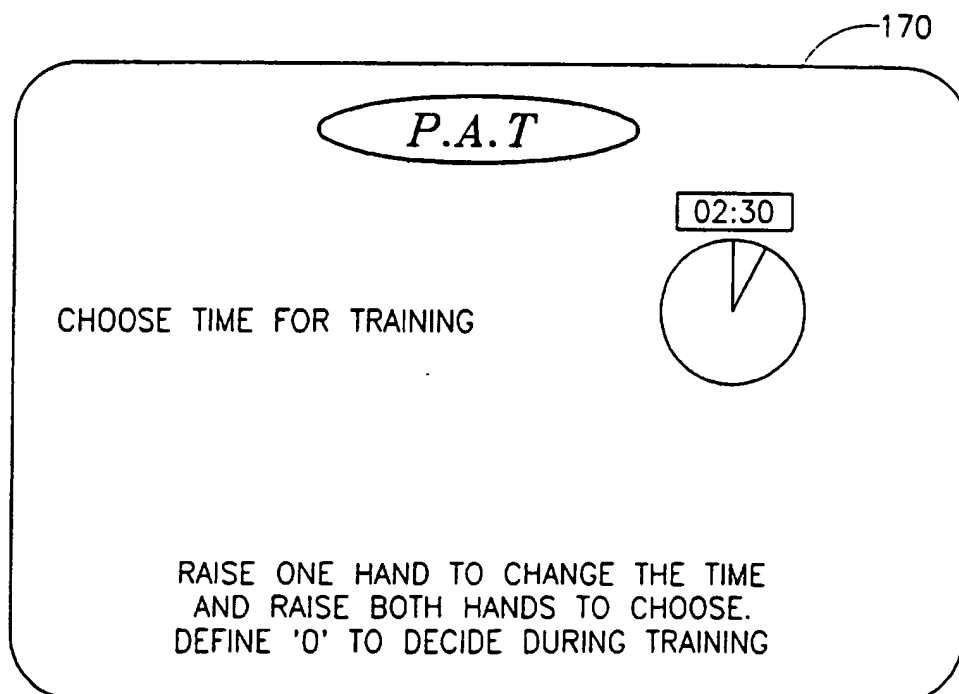
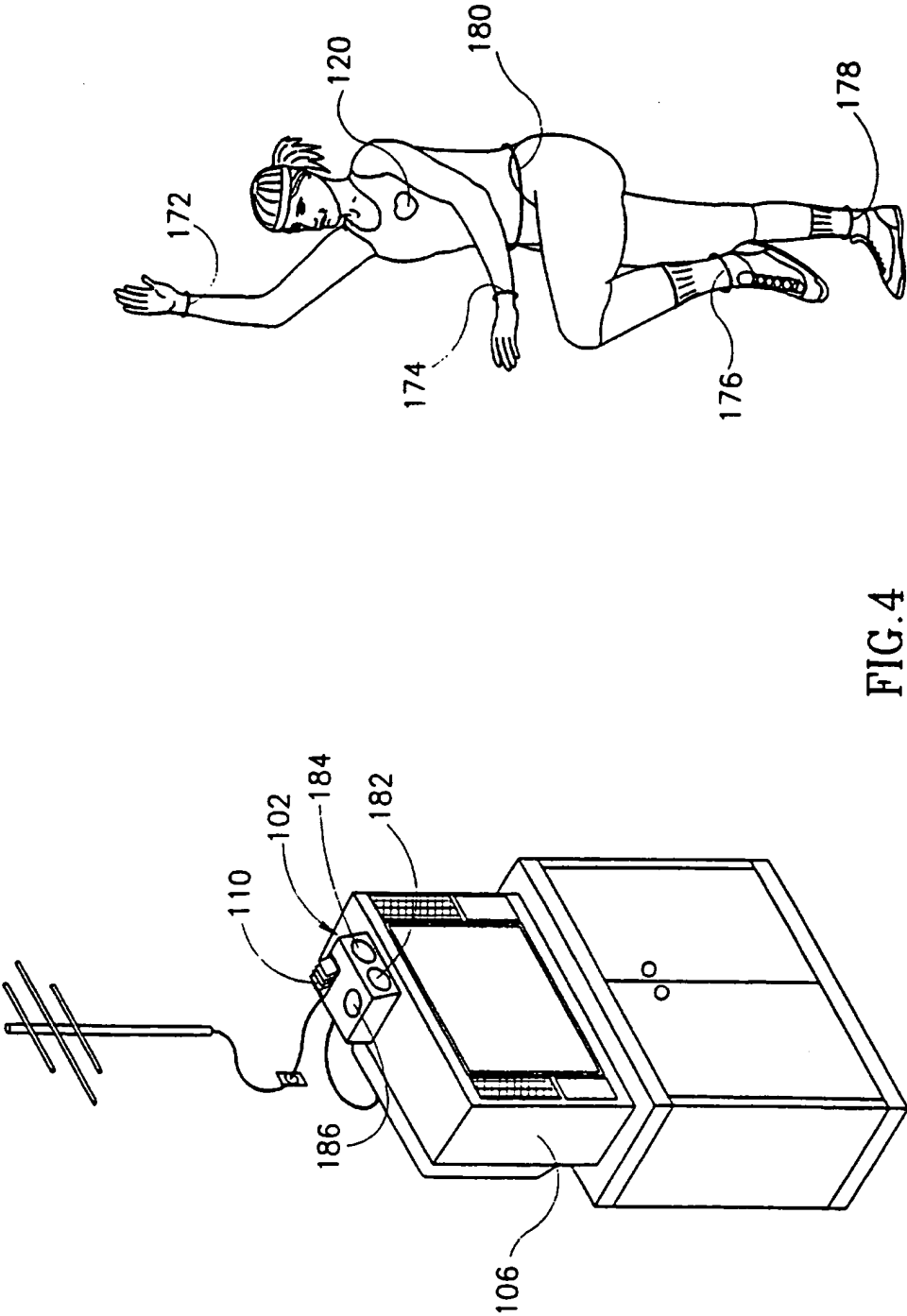


FIG. 3D



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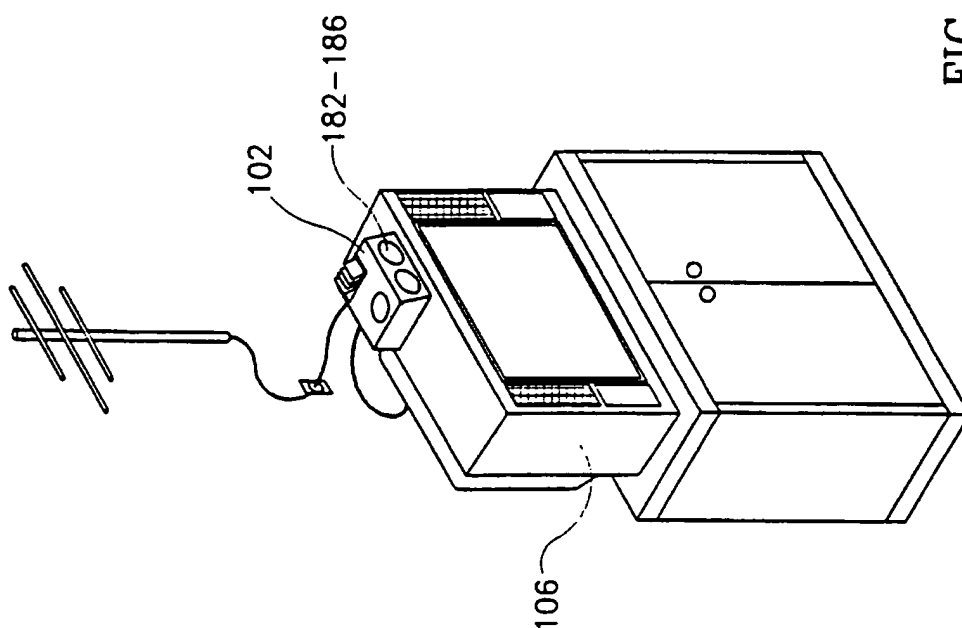
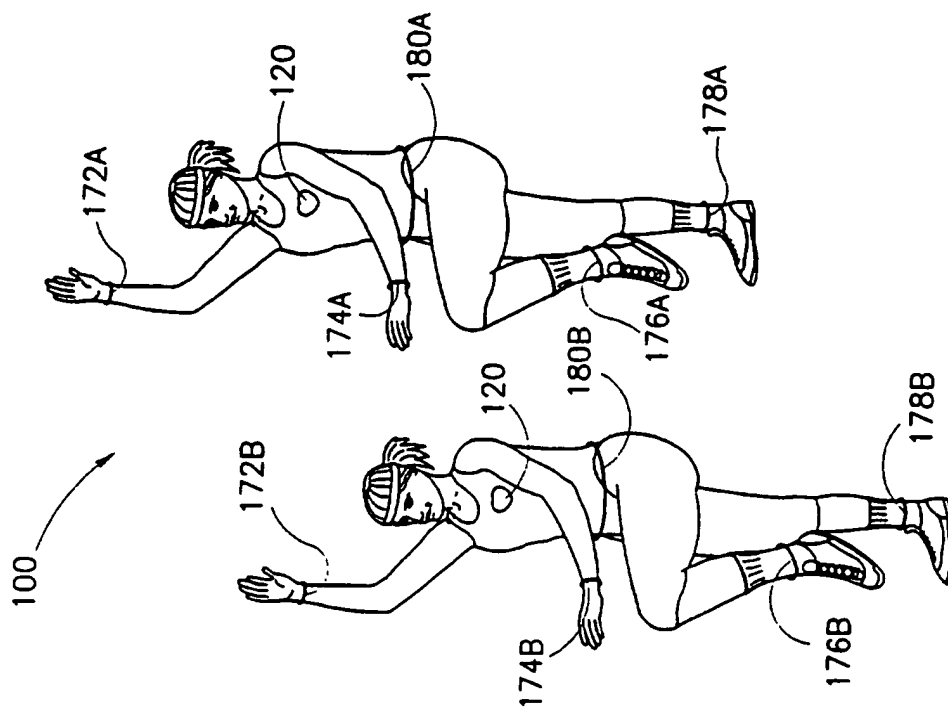


FIG. 5

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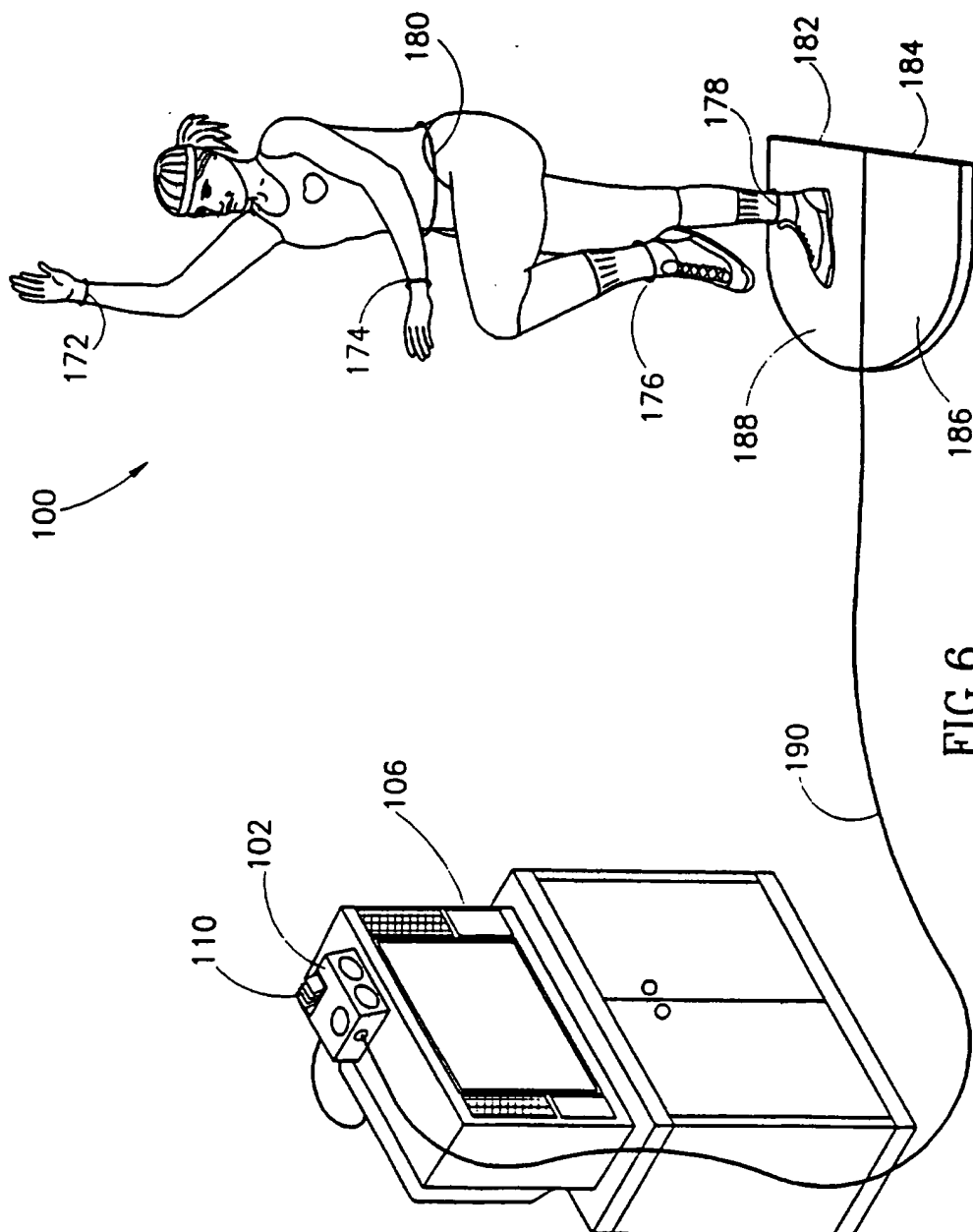
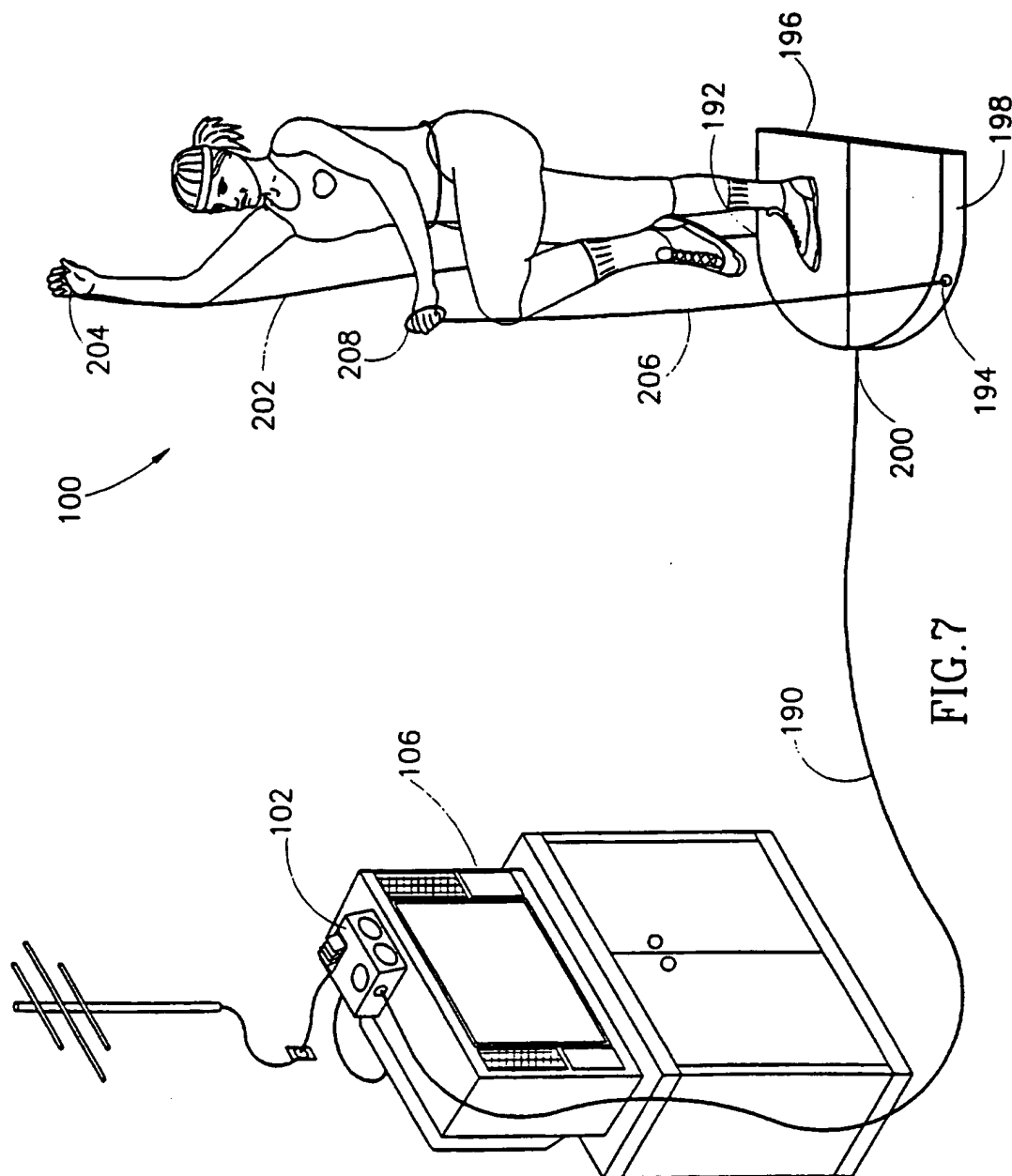
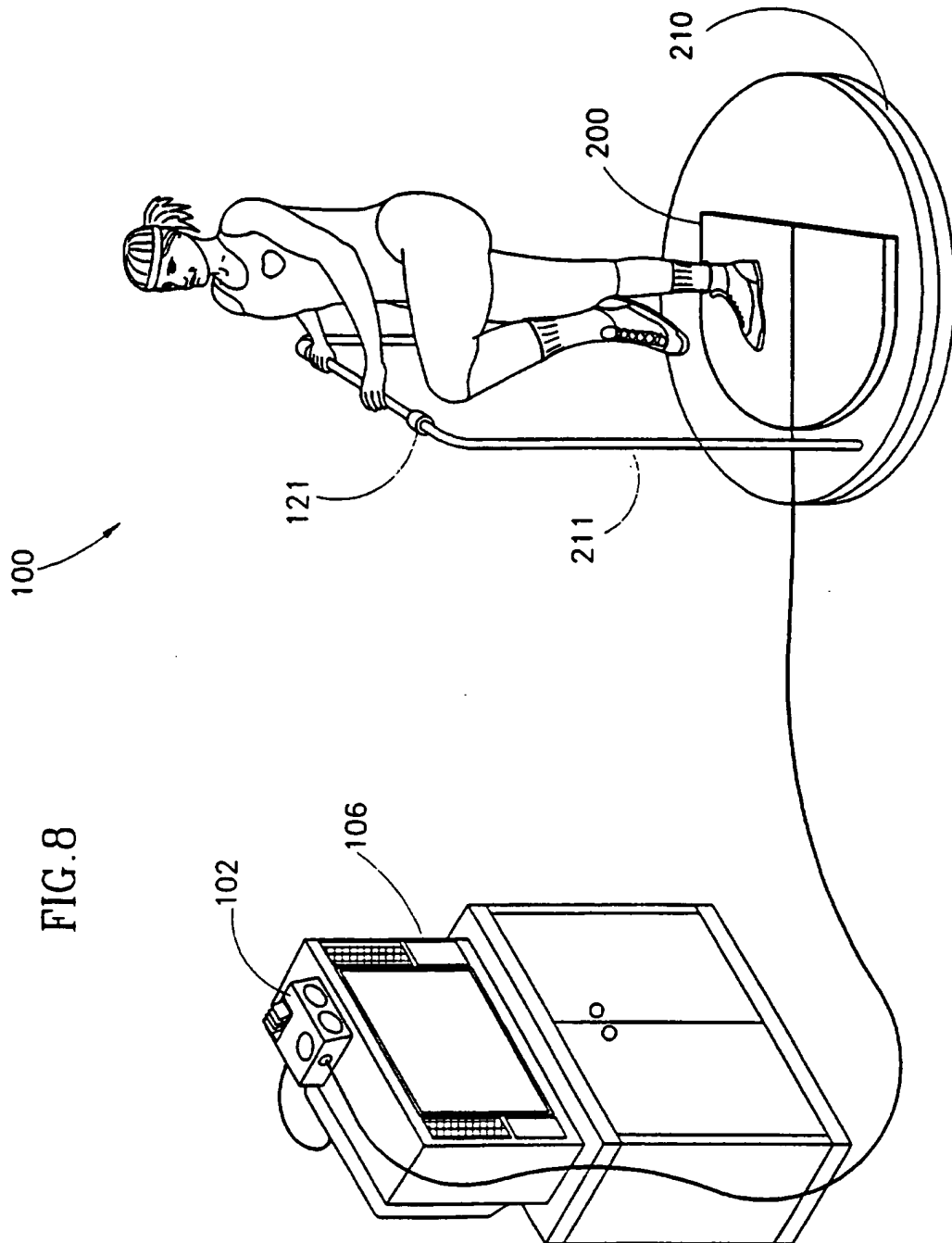


FIG. 6

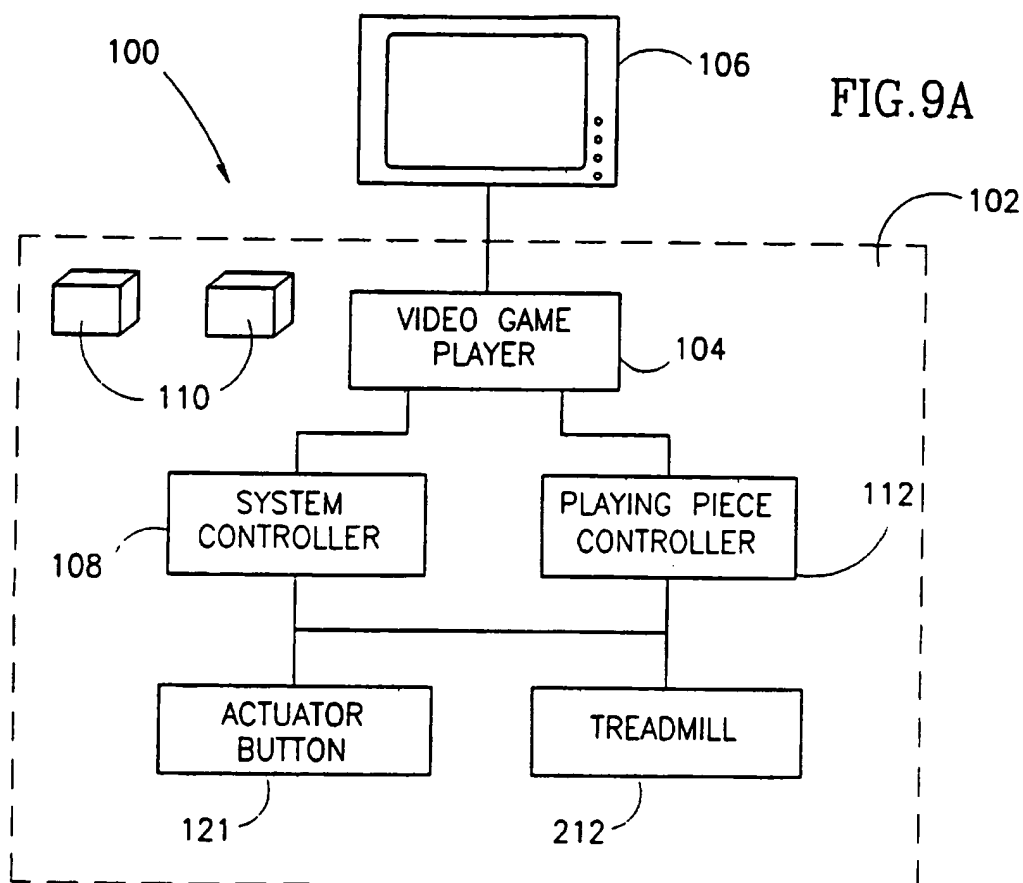
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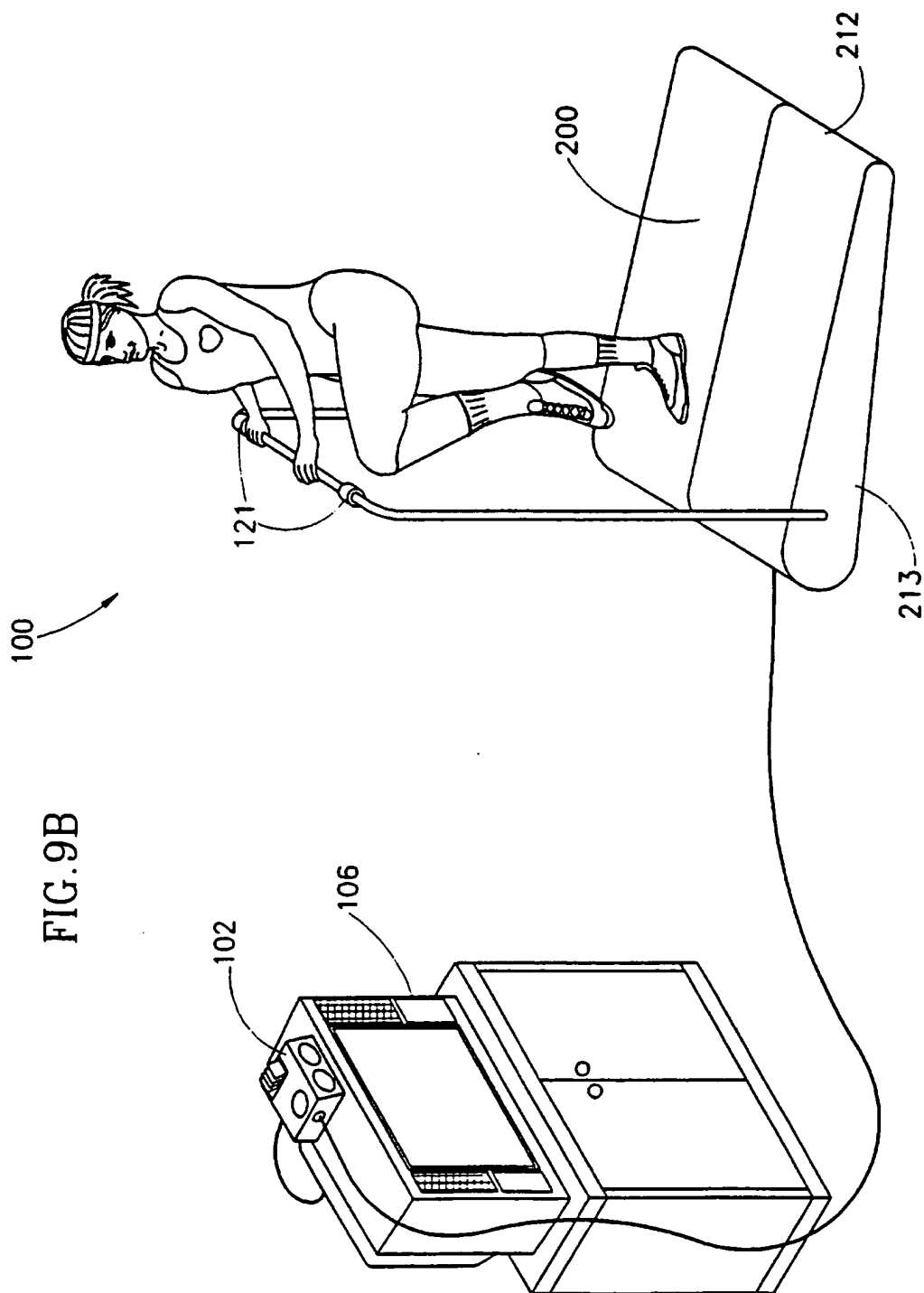


SCREEN REFRESHES

5	4	3	2	1	TIME BETWEEN 2 HANDS SWITCHES IN MILLISECONDS
0	0	0	0	0	$Y < 200$
0	0	0	0	1	$160 < Y < 200$
0	0	0	1	2	$120 < Y < 160$
0	0	1	2	3	$90 < Y < 120$
0	1	2	3	4	$Y < 90$

FIG. 13

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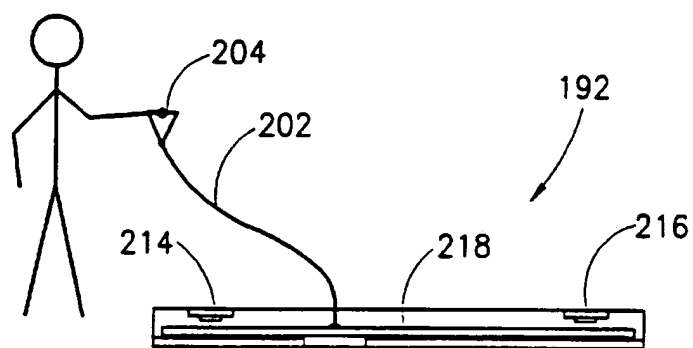


FIG. 10A

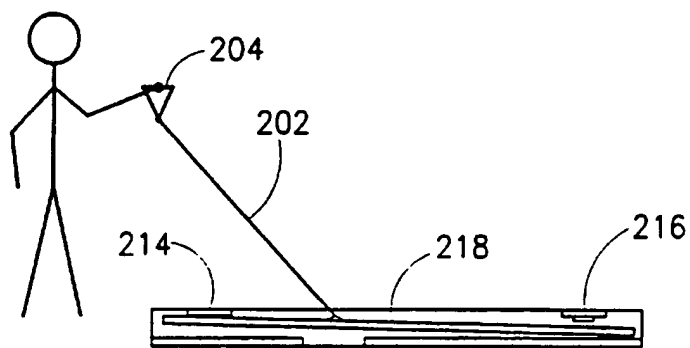


FIG. 10B

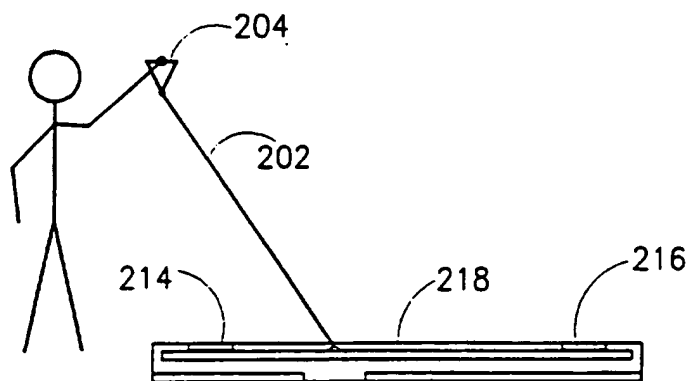


FIG. 10C

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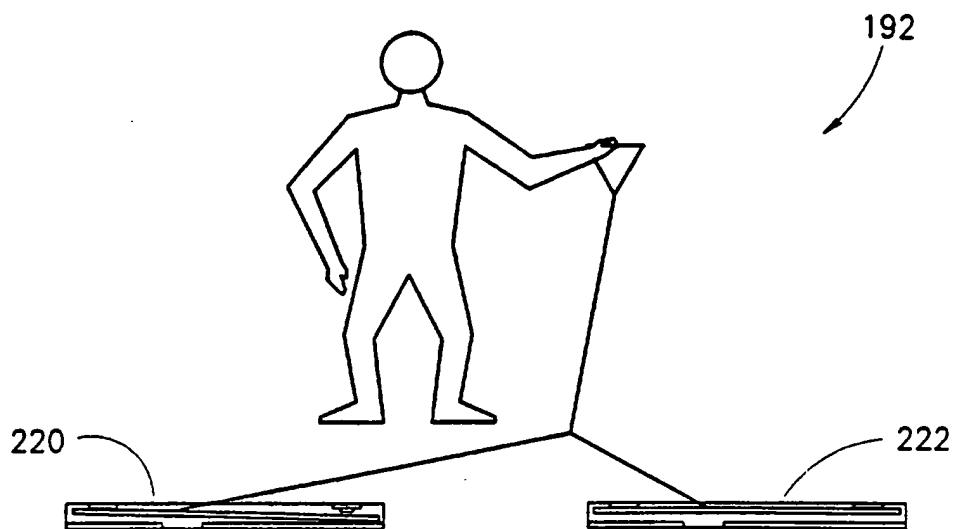


FIG. 11A

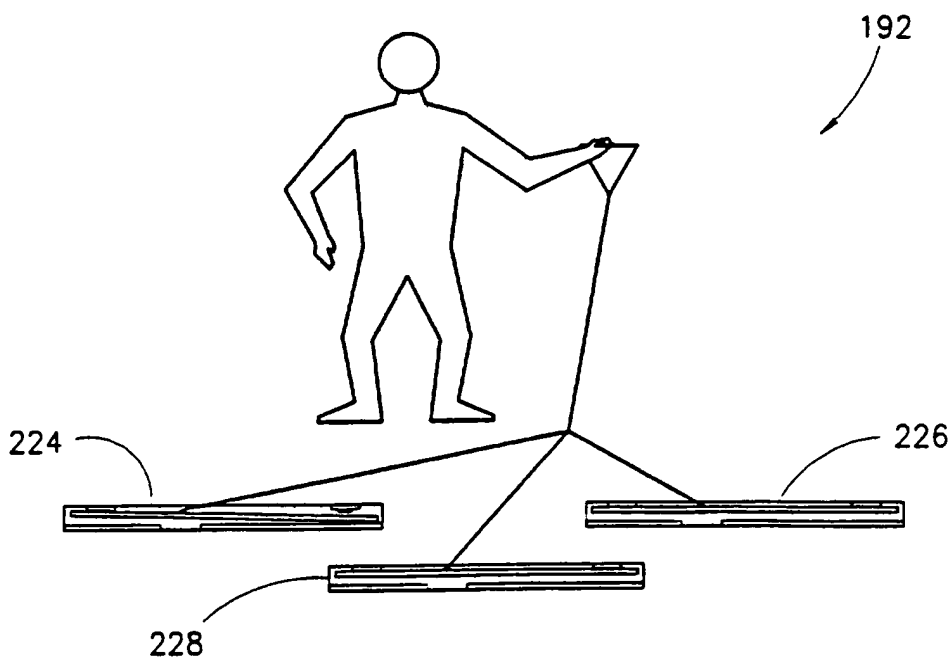


FIG. 11B

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LEVELS OF USER'S AEROBIC ACTIVITY	HEAVY WALKING	WALKING	JOGGING	RUNNING	FAST RUNNING	SPRINTING
AIRBORNE PERCENTAGE	-40% > P	-40%-0%	0-24%	24-50%	50-70%	70% < P
FREQUENCY						
$f < f$	0	0	0	0	0	0
1, 2	0	2	3	4	5	6
3, 4, 5	0	3	4	5	6	7
6, 7	0	4	5	6	7	8
$f > 8$	0	5	6	7	8	9

FIG.12

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US95/10694

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :A61B 5/04; A63B 26/00; G09G 3/02

US CL :482/4, 902

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 273/1248B, 434, 438; 482/1-8, 74, 79, 900-902

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
NONE

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
NONE

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	US, A, 5,288,078 (CAPPER ET AL.) 22 February 1994, see entire document.	1, 2, 10, 11, 17, 18
A	US, A, 4,925,189 (BRAEUNIG), 15 May 1990, see column 3 lines 52-64.	8
A	US, A, 5,125,647 (SMITH) 30 June 1992, see entire document.	2-5, 16
A	US, A, 5,001,632 (HALL-TIPPING) 19 March 1991, see entire document.	1-18
A	US, A, 5,139,261 (OPENIANO) 18 August 1992, see entire document.	1-3, 5-15, 16-18

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. ☐ See patent family annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:	"T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
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"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)	"&" document member of the same patent family
"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means	
"P" document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed	

Date of the actual completion of the international search
05 OCTOBER 1995

Date of mailing of the international search report
11 DEC 1995

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